

Asthma Exacerbation and Erythematous Papules in a Traveler

Takashi Shinha

Key words: asthma exacerbation, erythematous papules, envenomation

(Intern Med 56: 1123, 2017)

(DOI: 10.2169/internalmedicine.56.8067)



Picture.

A 32-year-old man with asthma developed wheezing while swimming in the sea of Florida, USA. The patient was evaluated at a hospital the next day for his unresolved respiratory distress. The patient was hemodynamically stable without signs of anaphylactic shock. On a physical examination, his lungs revealed scattered wheezing, and erythematous papular skin lesions were observed on his upper extremities (Picture). Chest X-ray was unrevealing. *Physalia physalis*, also known as the Portuguese man of war, is a marine creature resembling a jellyfish mainly found in the coastal areas of the Atlantic Ocean. Our patient retrospectively, but not convincingly, recalled coming across a jelly-like mass while swimming in the sea. His respiratory dis-

stress rapidly improved with systemic glucocorticoids only, and his skin lesions resolved in few weeks with residual minor skin pigmentation. *P. physalis* is a coelenterate possessing numerous tentacles lined with nematocysts that can inject venom toxin into humans. The toxin contains multiple allergic biochemical agents that can induce bronchospasm/asthma-like hypersensitivity reactions. The injection site generally erupts into localized linear, erythematous papules. Increased awareness of *P. physalis* is warranted for individuals with a history of asthma, since severe systemic manifestations leading to a fatal outcome, such as anaphylaxis and cardiovascular collapse, have been described in the literature (1, 2).

The author states that he has no Conflict of Interest (COI).

References

1. Fenner PJ. Dangers in the ocean: the traveler and marine envenomation. I. jellyfish. *J Travel Med* 5: 135-141, 1998.
2. Stein MR, Marraccini JV, Rothschild NE, Burnett JW. Fatal Portuguese man-o'-war (*Physalia physalis*) envenomation. *Ann Emerg Med* 18: 312-315, 1989.

The Internal Medicine is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view the details of this license, please visit (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).